

AGENCY: Emergency Residency Project [www.amesshelter.org](http://www.amesshelter.org) LIAISON: Michelle Fullerton

## 1. Need for Program

ERP provides transitional housing, acts as a homeless shelter, helps with rent/utility assistance on an emergency basis, and provides homelessness prevention programs. The need is growing with their available resources full and often times overflowing. They utilize multiple buildings and lease additional rooms when available for those in need but simply can't meet current demands. Their office often receives requests from outside Story County and sometimes outside the state of Iowa inquiring about availability.

**Emergency Shelter** – The shelter opened in 1985. The maximum stay is now 30 days, previously 2 weeks for occupants. Average shelter capacity is 24. The upstairs is utilized by the men, while the downstairs apartments are for women and families. The shelter has continuously been at capacity for several years. Overflow occupants are housed at the Ames Motor Lodge which holds 2 rooms when possible and provides them to the shelter at reduced rates. In the last few years it's been difficult to secure those rooms based on a large number of local construction projects due to those workers renting the rooms for extended periods of time. They still average 6-8 turn aways a day requesting shelter.

**Homelessness Prevention:** Rent and utility assistance is provided once every 12 months to help prevent someone from being evicted or having utilities shut off. ERP works in conjunction with Good Neighbor and several other agencies offering similar services. The client requesting funds must show a denial letter first from Story County Community Services and another agency before funding can be approved. Annually, this program The rate of funds available are:

Individual: \$250

Family: \$350

They are currently assisting residents of a rate between \$15,000-\$17,000 a month.

### **Transitional Housing:**

The transitional housing apartments have an average stay of 9 months with a maximum of 24 months, but the target is one year to transition residents to permanent housing. The apartments are next to the shelter and provide a sliding fee scale for families. This is an area that the shelter will be focusing on in the upcoming years. They are transitioning an employee to FT status to help oversee the program and provide more 1:1 counseling and services to assist residents in developing and executing an exit plan from temporary housing. This type of program is the only one of its kind in the area that works with clients long term to provide education and assistance to break the cycle of homelessness. The hope of the organization is to develop a program that can be executed in a shorter time frame with positive results leading to more families/individuals being assisted.

## 2. Program Strengths

The shelter has donated meals, bathroom and cleaning supplies, clothing, and other miscellaneous supplies provided to them by local churches, individuals, and businesses. The daily evening meals are prepared by volunteers from local churches removing the burden from shelter employees. Additional

staff positions are being added and reworked to make the staffing more efficient. They have a long standing group of board members with over 20+ years of service. Long term planning has been taking place to create some strategic changes for the future. In the last year an assessment tool has been utilized to better understand the risk level an individual seeking services may have.

### **3. Program Weaknesses**

The program doesn't have the space or budget to keep up with demands. They average 6-8 people a day being turned away for shelter services and on average 2 families a week for transitional housing. Ames is in need of more affordable housing and although growth in the number of apartment units is quickly rising making more apartments available, we're not seeing a decrease in pricing nor do many landlords want to participate in any type of subsidized housing since they are able to easily rent their units without the hassle of additional paperwork. Credit checks and background checks can also be an obstacle for many seeking housing. Additional funding and space are needed to move this program forward. Long term planning wants to look at more long term supportive housing since their current transitional living can only offer assistance to 6 families at a time.

### **4. Financial Outlook:**

The shelter has run with deficit funds over the last several years. Additional grants and fundraisers will be crucial to continued/or expanded services. A new idea is to offer an open house tour of the facilities for past donors. This, Carrie hopes would help spur additional future donations where needs could be seen. Several other fundraisers are being considered. They are receiving a federal grant that begins in January.

Additionally, it may look as though the organization is asking for a large increase in ASSET funding for Transitional Living programming while severely decreasing their self generated income. However, it is simply a change in formatting their numbers. Previously, Mr. Moss the prior ED, lumped all of their programming together. Each piece, Transitional Living, Shelter, and Homelessness Prevention are now being separated out. The self generated revenues in their documentation have been transitioned over to the Homelessness Prevention program which is not ASSET funded but the self generated income is still the same. Once numbers were separated out they discovered that in prior years the "ask" from ASSET for their transitional programming was actually only covering about 1.5 months of funding they needed for an entire year. This shift will more accurately reflect current and future needs for this program. Each program will operate on a separate budget moving forward.

### **5. Internal Management Practices:**

The new Executive Director, Carrie has settled into her position and major changes have begun taking shape. A small remodel within the main shelter's main floor opened up more storage and office space. Additional grants have been applied for, a tracking and scoring system has begun to be used, and shelter days available has been extended to assist with finding a more permanent solution. With 16 years of non-profit experience she is implementing a few immediate changes that should be impactful. Carrie added a half time position to help with data and clerical work in the office. Additionally, they implemented a case manager program one day a week to be more proactive working with mental health

issues to make proper referrals and provide clients with resources available to them. 700+ people are year are served through the shelter and 35 individuals through the transitional housing. Miguel from Primary Healthcare is the provider and has made numerous referrals for services to clients of ERP. The staff has received a lot of positive feedback regarding Miguel and they hope the program will continue to grow and by reputation more clients will feel comfortable seeking services.

#### **6. Agency suggestions/comments:**

##### **GENERAL ASSESSMENT:**

The work ERP does in our community is a service that's in high demand, not just in Story County, but throughout the state of Iowa and nationwide. ERP is in a unique circumstance of being able to reinvent/revitalize itself over the next few years. With a new director, adding staff, and seeking additional outside sources of funding, they are poised to make major strides/changes which hopefully will have a positive impact on the lives of many. It sounds as though they intend to include community education on what the demands are for this type of service, even in a community with our positive economic status. Making improvements to the current conditions in the shelter is a priority also. With board members serving over 20 years it provides a stable background of information. We did discuss board term limits as a possibility in the future structure through strategic planning. No action to be taken at this time. Future focus on transitional housing and preventative care will be essential to help end long term homelessness as an issue. More to come in expanding these programs.